WHIRRAKEE

October 2002 Vol. 23 No. 9

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Address for correspondence: PO Box 396, Bendigo 3552

Office Bearers for 2002 - 2003

President	Rob Moors	Mandurang South Rd.	5439 6254
Senior Vice President	Matthew Comer	46 Railway Place, Goornong	5432 2380
Junior Vice President	position not filled		
Secretary	Bill Holsworth	13 Nabilla Crs, Bendigo	5443 4063
Minute Secretary	Jan Orr	2 Cockerel Court, Bendigo	5443 5668
Treasurer	Glenise Moors	Mandurang South Rd. Sedgwick	5439 6254
Membership Officer	Kate Lottkowitz	80 Piccaninny Rd, RSD Strathfieldsaye	5439 3157
Excursion organiser	John Green	4/34 Eaglehawk Rd, Bendigo	5443 6756
Syllabus organiser	Rod Orr	2 Cockerel Court, Bendigo	5443 5668
Librarian	Diana Collier	31 Milroy Street, Bendigo	5443 0137
Garden Convenor/Secretary	Matthew Comer	46 Railway Place, Goornong	5432 2380
Hall Management	Bill Holsworth	13 Nabilla Crs, Bendigo	5443 4063
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Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $34; Family $40; Concession: Single $28.50; Family $34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $34. These rates include GST.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The invited speaker at general meetings starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper.
If a workshop is held prior to the meeting, it will be advertised and it usually starts at 7.00pm.
The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:30pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearers listed above, together with the following members: Barbara Pelczynska, Bob Ruddick, Maurie Stone, Stuart Fraser.

Excursions Excursions are conducted irregularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. In addition to local excursions, campouts are held several times each year, usually coinciding with long weekends or holiday periods.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has two active sub-groups:

Fauna Study Group: meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:30pm in the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building.

Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)

Bird Observers Group: meets on the first Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm in the Golden Square Senior Citizen Building.

Front Cover: Photographer: Darren Green

The photo shows the strangely named pink-tailed worm lizard (*Aprasia parapulchella*). Due to their small size and appearance, the Pink-tailed Worm Lizard may be erroneously taken for a worm, as its common name suggests. Once thought only to occur around Canberra, this unique reptile was "discovered" in Bendigo around 1988. At the time I was shown the new discovery, it was difficult to understand the excitement, as I had seen these before. In fact, around Bendigo they are usually found under small "hand-sized" rocks, around September to November, in most areas that contain Box and Ironbark trees. ....continued on the back cover

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club

Vol. 23, No. 9, October 2002

Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles.
Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editors' Note
Most of this Whirrakee is filled with material presented at the AGM. This is something we are obliged to do, but it is also valuable, every now and then, to reflect on what the club is about. Reading over all the club's activities of the last year might be an eye-opener for some members. As Bill has indicated in his article on page 9, it also gives us a nudge to think about future directions.
If you have not paid your subscription fees last month, please do so as soon as possible. As you can see from the new committee list on the inside front cover, Glenise has again volunteered to be our treasurer. Please thank her for this by making her life in this job as easy as possible. Nobody likes chasing people for money. In general, I want to thank all the people who have agreed to be on the committee and thus show willingness to make some time available for the club.
As you may know already, or will read in the president's report on page 4, Evelyn Leamon, a long-standing club member died recently. For those who knew Evelyn, an article is in the making and will appear in the next edition.
Lastly, please read the Whirrakee right to the end....there is an interesting bird observation on the last page.

The Field Naturalists Garden – Spring 2002

by Matthew Comer

In July, I reported in *Whirrakee* how the garden was generally coping well with the dry conditions except for a few losses. Well, the very dry weather is still with us, as I am sure everyone is well aware, and the garden has continued to cope well with the conditions.

I looked back through my reports for the previous two Septembers and it is interesting that there is really very little difference in the flowering this year despite the drought. Most of the same species are flowering at the same time and there is not a great difference in the quantity of flowers on most species. The majority of the species are shrubs and trees.

Whilst there is little difference in the trees and shrubs, a walk around the garden soon reveals a different story with the herbaceous plants. The various grasses, daisies and lilies etc., many of which are normally just starting to flower in late September/October have greatly reduced growth this season. Most of the lilies probably won't flower this year. Some plants such as the Clustered Everlasting and Sticky Everlasting will flower but the flowering stems are less than half the height of last year's stems. A similar situation exists with the grasses. All these plants will probably still survive though, and will hopefully have a better season next year.

On Sunday 15th September, four members attended the working bee to weed, prune and generally tidy the garden and achieved the bulk of the work. Some of the workers also attended another working bee to finish off. The new plants which we recently added to the garden are mostly holding on in the dry conditions, though a few have perished. We watered them on the 15th and will keep an eye on their progress.

Below is a summary of the plants in flower in September:

Acacia acinacea	Gold Dust Wattle
Acacia aspera	Rough Wattle
Acacia ausfeldii	Whipstick Cinnamon Wattle
Acacia montana	Mallee Wattle
Acacia paradoxa	Hedge Wattle
Acacia pycnantha	Golden Wattle
Acacia williamsonii	Whirrakee Wattle
Austrostipa elegantissima	Feather Spear Grass
Bracteantha viscosa	Sticky Everlasting
Chrysocephalum apiculatum	Common Everlasting
C. semipapposum	Clustered Everlasting
Cryptandra amara	Bitter Cryptandra
Daviesia ulicifolia	Gorse Bitter Pea
Eucalyptus leucoxylon	Yellow Gum
Eucalyptus polyanthemos	Red Box
Grevillea alpina	Cats Claw
Grevillea rosmarinifolia	Rosemary Grevillea
Hakea decurrens	Silky Hakea
Hardenbergia violacea	Sarsparilla
Minuria interriginia	Smooth Minuria
Olearia teretifolia	Cypress Daisy Bush
Philotheca verrucosa	Bendigo Wax Flower
Pimelia linifolia	Rice Flower
Prostanthera aspalathoides	Scarlet Mint Bush
Westringia crassifolia	Whipstick Westringia
W. eremicola	Slender Westringia

September Wattle Workshop

by Sabine Wilkens

An unexpected large attendance at the workshop prior to the AGM was a great surprise. I had only brought six microscopes and we had enough eager field naturalists to keep them fully occupied for the hour.

The wattles were mainly from the university gardens but some people added to the variety by bringing their own. All but one specimen was named by the end of the workshop. Thanks to all enthusiastic participants to make the setting up worthwhile. Thanks also to my current 2nd year plant ecology students for providing data that showed that the extra-floral nectaries of Golden Wattle, *Acacia pycnantha,* produced more nectar close to inflorescences rather than far away from inflorescences. What this means, and whether this tiny amount of nectar from these nectaries on the edge of the phyllodes could attract potential pollinators is not known. Ants certainly hang around these nectar glands, but if ants are the 'intended consumers', then why would there be more nectar produced near the flowers?

Below is a list of the wattles of that night:

Looking at Matthew's list above, we could have found a few more wattles in the club garden!

Acacia pycnantha	Golden Wattle
Acacia cardiophylla	Wyalong Wattle
Acacia sophorae (or A.longifolia)	Coast Wattle
Acacia floribunda	White Sallow Wattle
Acacia ausfeldii	Whipstick Cinnamon Wattle
Acacia williamasonii	Whirrakee Wattle
Acacia leprosa 'Scarlet Blaze'	(bright red!)

Acacia decurrens	Early Black Wattle
Acacia genistifolia	Spreading Wattle
Acacia calamifolia	Wychitella Wattle
Acacia pravissima	Ovens Wattle
Acacia paradoxa	Hedge Wattle
Acacia aspera	Rough Wattle
Acacia howittii	Sticky Wattle
Acacia linearifolia ??	
Acacia acinacea	Gold Dust Wattle
Acacia baileyana	Cootamundara Wattle
Acacia melanoxylon	Blackwood
Acacia sp.	

Bendigo Field Naturalist Club President's Report 2001/2002.

By Barbara Pelczynska,

Our Club exists now for 57 years. This fact alone says a lot about our membership and activities. It shows that we are resilient, cooperative, friendly and diligent workers. Because our activities are interesting, we now attract a lot of guests including young students from tertiary institutions. Over the years the Club has also earned credibility and respect within the broader community. We are regularly invited to take part in meetings and workshops dealing with the natural environment and to write submissions and sit on committees. Our opinion is sought on issues such as firewood, conservation, mining, national parks, water, salinity etc. We take part in surveys for the Bird Atlas and surveys of flora and fauna. We organise excursions and lectures on variety of topics. Our lectures are well attended both by members and visitors. So too are the workshops which we began to run regularly since March last year. They are now run on bimonthly basis.

This year's syllabus, organised by Rod Orr, covered a broad spectrum of topics, from Botanical Explorers in Australia, Secret Life of the Compost to the Importance of the Invertebrates.

As a Club we are very fortunate that our membership includes naturalists, nature photographers, ecologists, botanists, geologists and other experts. Many of our members are excellent speakers and give talks to other groups. Also, some members belong as individuals to other environmental groups thus broadening their contribution to the preservation of the natural environment.

Our members have researched and written books on flora and fauna of the Bendigo region. These books are now popular and widely used by people living in this region.

Last year the Club has expanded the list of its books with the publication of Jennifer Shield's book "Spiders of Bendigo and Box-Ironbark Country of Victoria". The Club has also decided to republish its book, "Wildflowers of Bendigo", in a revised version.

In cooperation with the Field Naturalist Clubs of Castlemaine and Maryborough, the Club has acquired funding and organised the publication of a biodiversity data base for the Box-Ironbark forest region on CD ROM. The preparation of the CD ROM is being done by Viridans Biological Database. It is scheduled to be published in October, 2002.

The Club's Newsletter *Whirrakee*, edited by Sabine Wilkens and Tom Burton, continues to be published every month. It contains detailed syllabus, calendar of activities, reports, notes and articles by members on variety of topics.

During the year we have been saddened by the death of Robert Allen and Evelyn Leamon. They were both long-standing members of the Club. Both of them made a valuable contribution to our Club. Robert will be remembered by the herbarium, his life's work, which he has left to the Club. Evelyn is the co-author of the original Wildflowers of Bendigo book, which has contributed to the promotion of the indigenous flowers of Bendigo.

The Club's activities also included:-

- participation in activities of the Fauna Study Group including survey of bats and putting up of nesting boxes in wildlife corridors;
- participation in the activities of the re-established Bird Observers Group including bird survey for the Bird Atlas;
- the establishment of BFNC's Indigenous Garden which we began 7 years ago in partnership with the Bendigo Native Plant Group. The work was carried out in stages, the last stage being completed during this year. From now on only maintenance will be required;
- the organisation of this year's Spring in the Bendigo Bush events as detailed in the *Whirrakee*. Unfortunately this year the Bendigo Native Plant Group could not participate and so the very popular Wildflower Show event had to

be omitted from the programme;
• excursions run by the Club, the Fauna Study Group and the Bird Observer's Group;

• representation at the following conferences and workshops:-
• Conference for "Sustainable Mining"; organised by Bendigo Mining;
• Firewood Strategy Workshop;
• Grassland Conference;
• Friends of Merri Creek's Protection Merri Creek Grasslands from the Hume Highway By-pass Strategy Seminar;
• Campaspe Implementation Committee workshops for a "Concept for a Box-Ironbark Interpretive Centre";
• North Central Catchment Management Authority Review of Catchment Strategies;
• seminar for 'Not for Profit Organisations';
• Bendigo Creek Restoration Committee;
• Land Care Action Plan Workshop;
• Environment Assessment Workshop; Rural Regional Forum;
• Murray Darling Basin Commission's Information Sessions;

• running workshops and providing information displays for:-
• the Bendigo Youth Environment Forum which was organised by the LEAF students of LaTrobe University, Bendigo, for secondary school students;
• "From Your Street to Your Creek" World Environment Day activities which were organised by the North Central Management Authority for the primary school children;

• writing of the following submissions, comments and objections:-
• objections to the removal of native vegetation from the McGlashan and Sutton Grange Roads' road reserves;
• comments on the Wood Utilisation Plan;
• submission on the Bendigo Industrial Land Strategy;
• application for habitat shelters permit in the Whipstick State Park;
• comments on the Draft Native Vegetation Management Framework;
• re-submission to the Premier of the Club's Submission on the Harcourt-Calder Highway Bypass and submission on Faraday to Ravenswood-Calder Highway upgrading;
• meetings with NRE and Parks Victoria on fire management in the Whipstick State Park and on the management of the Wellsford Forest;
• submission on the Mid-Murray Forest Management Plan;
• submission on the Firewood Strategy;
• Dodder research meeting with the DNRE' Forestry Division;
• Submission on the Environment Assessment Review;
• Presentation to the Box-Ironbark Implementation Committee;

• assisting in the following school educational excursion:-
• Kennington Primary School nature study excursion to the Kennington Park;
• Maiden Gully Primary School's Great Marsupial Night stalk;

• taking part in meetings with politicians about the implementation of the ECC "Box-Ironbark Forests and Woodlands Investigation" Final Report's recommendations;
• representation on the Spring Gully Recreational Reserve, "Landscape Management Plan" Committee, Whipstick Park Advisory Committee, Friends of the Tang Tang Committee and Friends of the Kennington Reservoir and Parklands Committee;
• management of the Golden Square Senior Citizens Club building.

• taking part in the following campaigns:-
• campaign for the establishment of The Greater Bendigo National Park;
• Box-Ironbark Camp out in Maryborough;
• picnic in the Wellsford Forest;
• "Rally for the Forests" demonstration;

• VFNCA Camp-out

• "Adopt a Highway Activity", which was discontinued half way through the year.

Conclusion
As you can see, the list of our activities over the past 12 months is very long, showing how busy we all were. But the list by itself does not do full credit to the work done by our Club members. As Bill so well pointed out in his last year's secretary report
"the Club's success on social, educational and political fronts are not achieved without a lot of diligent members. Many Members willingly give their time and expertise to assist the Club. We hope that this involvement will continue to increase and the Club will attain even better results in the future".

STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2002

GENERAL ACCOUNT - INVESTMENT ACCOUNT

RECEIPTS		EXPENDITURES		
Membership	3302.95	Whirrakee Production		1352.19
Subscription	85.32	Whirrakee Postage		654.08
Herbarium	300.00	Subscription		86.36
Wildflower Show	916.65	Auditor		130.00
Donation	45.00	Wildflower Show		408.32
Interest	181.22	Insurance		235.00
Living Records CD-ROM	12000.00	Hall Maintenance		850.74
Sale of Books	328.72	Books for Sale		312.57
Publication A/c Transfer	25.00	Garden		123.60
A.T.O. Reimbursement	67.40	Stationery, Printing		87.76
GST	294.51	GST		143.58
A.T.O.	839.00	A.T.O.		219.00
Publication A/c Transfer	30.00	Bendigo National Park Group		367.50
		Government Charges		24.70
		Miscellaneous:		
		Secretarial Expenses	77.00	
		Travel Expenses	70.00	
		P.O.Box Rental	45.00	
		Incorporation Fee	66.00	
		Pit Trap Buckets	60.00	
		Banking Error	30.00	355.70
				5351.10
		Surplus for Year		13064.67
	$ 18415.77			$ 18415.77
Bank Balance at 1 August 2001		**Bank Balance at 31 July 2002**		
Cheque A/c	2989.43	Cheque A/c		16054.10
Term Deposit	8972.95	Term Deposit		8972.95
	11962.38			
Surplus for Year	13064.67			
	$ 25027.05			$ 25027.05

I have examined the documents and records supporting the above statements of receipts and expenditures and I am able to report that in my opinion the statement of receipts and expenditures as shown, fairly reflects the transactions that have taken place in the bank accounts of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc. during the financial year ended 31 July 2002.

D.D.Wright C.P.A.

Auditor

15/8/02

STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2002

PUBLICATION ACCOUNT - INVESTMENT ACCOUNT

RECEIPTS		EXPENDITURES	
Sales:		Printing of Spider Book	12854.00
Wildflowers	880.59	Book Launch	137.57
Eucalypts	660.87	Postage	78.29
Birds	670.00	Stationery	3.36
Orchids	965.28	GST	1302.99
Spiders	3545.38	Government Charges	8.50
Postage	59.93	Transfer to General A/c	25.00
Interest	643.54	Transfer to General A/c	839.00
GST	318.90		15248.71
A.T.O.	839.00		
Transfer from Term Deposit	7738.00	Surplus for Year	1072.78
	$ 16321.49		$ 16321.49
Bank Balance at 1 August 2001		**Bank Balance at 31 July 2002**	
Cheque A/c	4576.25	Cheque A/c	5649.03
Term Deposit	23556.84	Term Deposit	15818.84
Term Deposit	6500.00	Term Deposit	6500.00
	34633.09	Transfer to Cheque A/c	7738.00
Surplus for Year	1072.78		
	$ 35705.87		$ 35705.87

I have examined the documents and records supporting the above statements of receipts and expenditures and I am able to report that in my opinion the statement of receipts and expenditures as shown, fairly reflects the transactions that have taken place in the bank accounts of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc. during the financial year ended 31 July 2002.

D.D.Wright C.P.A.

Auditor

17/8/02

STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2002

MEETING HALL ACCOUNT

RECEIPTS		EXPENDITURES	
Hall Hire	2352.82	City of Greater Bendigo	3344.40
Donations	2400.00	Stationery	2.25
Interest	1.75	Government Charges	6.30
GST	36.18		3352.95
		Surplus for Year	1437.80
	$ 4790.75		$ 4790.75
Bank Balance at 1 August 2001		**Bank Balance at 31 July 2002**	
Cheque A/c	1768.21	Cheque A/c	3206.01
Surplus for Year	1437.80		
	$ 3206.01		$ 3206.01

I have examined the documents and records supporting the above statements of receipts and expenditures and I am able to report that in my opinion the statement of receipts and expenditures as shown, fairly reflects the transactions that have taken place in the bank accounts of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc. during the financial year ended 31 July 2002.

D.D.Wright C.P.A.

Auditor

15/08/02.

Future Directions of the Club

by Bill Holsworth

We are starting the 58th year of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club. We should consider what directions the Club should take, what we hope to achieve, and how we will accomplish the tasks. Environment Victoria recently sent us their 2001-02 Annual Report containing their President's Report. There is a statement I would like to bring to your attention.
"As to where we evolve it is clear that EV [Environment Victoria] currently works strongly as a community educator promoting efficient resource use in the community and as a regulatory advocate seeking to safeguard the environment from destructive practices."

Many of the activities of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club fit the above description. We have published 4 books in recent years and are about to publish a revised Wildflower book. We have raised funds for the preparation of a CD-ROM that will contain descriptions and distributions of all the plants and terrestrial vertebrates in the central box-ironbark area of Victoria. This CD will be available in mid November. We have worked with school and community programs to encourage and teach aspects of natural history and conservation. For our members we have organised interesting monthly lectures, several workshops and excursion. All these activities will continue next year, but is there more that we could or should do?

To do more requires more volunteer input from the membership. For some members time is a limiting factor, for others limited knowledge is their main excuse. However there are, hopefully, some who have the time and knowledge and just need a bit of encouragement. There are unfilled positions on the Committee and there are many potential sub-committees that can be created. This year we had to drop our involvement with the "Adopt a Highway" program and reduce the scope of the "Spring in the Bendigo Bush" program because the membership lacked the time or knowledge to continue.

Next year, if the legislation is passed, we will be surrounded by National Parks. Will the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club have a role to play in their promotion, development and use? Let me reword that sentence; "Will the membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club have a role to play in their promotion, development and use?"

After November we will have a CD-ROM with detailed access to the distribution of plants and animals. We will be able to readily discern which species distributions are poorly documented, and we will be able to identify areas that are poorly studied. If we make it our business to investigate these species and areas we can add new data to the CD database so that subsequent decision on resource management or education programs will be more correctly considered. Should this be a major goal of the Club, and if so, how are we going to encourage and coordinate the activities?

The "Natural History Workshops" started this year were enthusiastically received. Should they continue, and if so, in what format? Should they be extended in time and replace some of the evening speakers? Should they be held on a different night? Should the topics be concentrated on a theme, or sample a wide variety of subjects like they did this year? Some members have the potential to make valuable contributions to this activity and should be on an organising committee. If no one volunteers to help the program may fail.

The Club cannot cover all aspects of Natural History, all the conservation promotions, and all the environment concerns. If members of the Club do what they can, do what they believe to be important, and encourage other members to do the same, Bendigo will continue to have one of the best Field Naturalists Clubs in Victoria.

2003 Spring in the Bendigo Bush Program

by Bill Holsworth

Spring in the Bendigo Bush has now completed its eighth year. In that time, the program has grown considerably, and is now entrenched on the Bendigo Events calendar. The following are a few comments for consideration regarding arrangements for next year's program.

Due to public liability issues the Steering Committee decided, for 2002, to schedule only a small program of events organised and conducted by the Bendigo Field Naturalists' Club Inc.

The arrangements for 2003 must now be considered and a Steering Committee needs to be established now and begin meeting in Nov. 2002. That Committee must consider if the program will return to its pre-2002 format with several clubs organising and conducting events as part of the Spring in the Bendigo Bush program. Or, should it remain as it was in 2002? If we want run significantly more events than in 2002 we may need to consider employing a coordinator. We need to consider who would employ the coordinator and the job description.

The Steering Committee, at its several meetings in 2002, recognised the need for a more formalised structure to work jointly with the City of Greater Bendigo and possibly with Parks Victoria. Anthony Sheean, Community Environment Officer, City of Greater Bendigo, has indicated that one consideration is "risk assessment". The City expects to have some formal guidelines for risk assessment procedures and possibly hold some training sessions. There are several other topics that the Steering Committee will need to consider; some obvious, and some that no one has yet thought of!

We should nominate Club representatives to a Committee that would meet in November and they should be prepared to come to that meeting with well considered (written) proposals.

Submission on Bendigo Fire District Operations Plan 2002-2005

by

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc. representatives: Dr. William N. Holsworth and Rodney Orr, and Bendigo and District Environment Council representatives: Stan Pelczynski, Stuart Fraser, and Ian Friswell

This submission was sent to Sharon Thomas, Fire Management Officer, Bendigo Fire District, NRE and Roy Speechley, Fire Management Officer, Parks Victoria

Thank you for arranging the meetings on 27 May and 6 Sept. 2002 to discuss the recent fire management operations in the Whipstick forest and the Bendigo Fire District Operations Plan 2002-2005.

At the May meeting we expressed concern about several aspects of the Whipstick fire.

1. We believe that, from an operational standpoint, the burn was not needed because there is no history of fire in this part of the box-ironbark forest.
2. The strip burned was too wide.
3. The burn was too hot.
4. Trees and stumps were left to burn when the fire could have been put out. Special protection of hollow bearing trees could have reduced the impact on the many species of animals that use hollows.
5. The method of notifying the public was not adequate.
6. The dead trees and fallen timber will be attractive to firewood collectors and a special effort should be made to inform the public that the wood is not to be removed from the forest. Special enforcement operations may be needed.

We consider your responses to these concerns at that meeting to be inadequate. You did not refute our statements of concern and you did not agree to modify your method of operation. If you seriously want to communicate to the public we would like you to answer these concerns.

1. When was the last naturally occurring fire in the Whipstick and what was its extent?
2. How wide was the strip supposed to be, and how wide was the burn? We would like to see the planning maps.
3. Your management plan suggests a spring burn but you burnt it in the autumn when it was very dry. Why?
4. What justification was there for a hot burn? Also, an ecological burn is rarely, if ever scheduled for Spring. The management plan does not reflect the usual ecological principles that it should be for an area about to be proclaimed as a National Park.
5. If you protected the habitat trees from fire, we would like to know where these trees are and the success of the protection measures.
6. We claimed that you did not notify adjacent land-holders. Who did you contact and when? What is your policy to be in the future? Were notices placed on all major tracks in the area one week prior to the planned burn date?
7. On one of our recent post fire inspections of the area we noticed that a large number of the fallen trees had been cut up and portions removed. We saw no effort by NRE or Parks Victoria to inform the public that they were not to remove the wood, nor was there any information on the ecological value of the fallen trees.

If you are expecting us, and others, as members of the public, to write a considered response to the Operations Plan we need to be given the necessary information and sufficient time for us to assimilate and discuss it. The scale of the photocopied map that you gave us on 6 September is useless for examining what should be a professionally prepared Burn Plan. What is needed is a 1:5,000 or 1:10,000 not 1:100,000 or 1:250,000 so that we can discuss topics such as mosaic patterns with dimensions of 50 or 100 meters.

Some of us inspected the plan in July and August at 57 View St. in preparation for the meeting on 6 Sept. On July 31 Dr. Holsworth sent you an email in which he requested that some information regarding areas around Bendigo be made available prior to the Sept. 6 meeting. Our request was ignored by your staff. The requests relating to Operations were as follows:

- We expected to receive a Burn Plan for each area that would include the rational (objectives) behind each planned burn area because the report contains no information at all except to note that fuel levels are H, VH, etc.
- We expected to receive the Burn Plans for the following areas: Skylark Road, Pioneer-Guys Hill Road, Girvans, Tracy and Currie area, Bullock Rd and Specimen Hill, and Sedgwick.
- We expected to receive maps, at an appropriate scale, showing the areas to be burnt, the control lines, and areas to be excluded.
- We expected to receive fire hazard reduction plans for adjacent properties to be implemented prior to the burn.
- We expected to receive Burn Plans containing information on rare species, habitat trees (and measures to be taken to avoid their loss), potential for weed invasion, other biodiversity effects, dynamics of the fuel load in the forest and in adjacent properties, fire history and previous control measures.

The Bendigo Fire District Operations Plan 2002-2005 contains an inadequate description of the vegetation, no indication of rare and threatened flora or fauna, and no suggestion that ecosystem attributes (such as corridors) have been considered. There are many more items that should be in the Operations Burn Plan and that should have been approved before the burn was conducted.

Was a Burn Plan prepared that addressed all the items listed in your Code of Practice for Prescribed Burning? If it was, why was it not available to us before or during the meeting on 6 September? If Burn Plans have been prepared for the areas noted above, we would like to study them and have time to comment on them well in advance of any burning activity. Part of the Skylark road area has been burnt. We would like to see a report on the assessment of that operation. At the meeting on Sept. 6 we were told that three study plots were established in the Skylark Road burn area. Where are they, and could we examine the pre-fire data that was collected?

We have watched Skylark Road develop over a period of more than 30 years to reach a stage of growth which 'fire sensitive forest officers' now interpret as dangerously dense, flammable vegetation. The south side of the road is about the only location in the Whipstick where mixed Melaleuca shrubland is dense enough to provide nesting habitat for some really uncommon birds such as the Crested Bellbird, Gilbert's Whistler, Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, and White-eared Honeyeater. This section of Skylark Road is the only unburned part left after the Loeser Road section was burnt. It is essential to have dense growth for biodiversity conservation. North of Skylark Road there had developed a mosaic of vegetation resulting from eucalyptus harvesting. The harvested sections are cleared bare to the ground almost every year; the un-harvested parts are developing into a healthy mallee woodland (almost a closed forest) with a low, sparse understorey of Gold-dust Wattle. It should be left to its own devices and not disturbed by burning at all. The area around Skylark Dam has several rare and threatened species of indigenous orchids. It desperately needs to be protected from any disturbance and is generally quite open and safe and not a fire hazard. These features are the values of the forest that need to be protected from mis-management.

From an ecological and scientific perspective the concerns were that no ecological research had been conducted in the Whipstick forest or in any of the areas considered in the Operations Burn Plan. Probably there are protected animals such as the swift parrot, brush-tailed phascogale, pink-tailed worm lizard, that use these areas permanently, annually or sporadically There are also several rare plants, including the winter flowering iron-bark.

The Whipstick area contains summer, autumn, and winter flowering iron-bark areas. Because of this, flowering trees are present within the forest for up to 7 months making it one of the most important nectar producing areas in Victoria. The northern areas are summer flowering , the southern areas are winter flowering, and between them are autumn flowering trees. The close proximity of these three types is unusual within the box-iron-bark forest. It is very significant because the flowering is concentrated in area and uninterrupted over a 7 month period. This area is probably the most important nectar producing area within the Bendigo district. It is well known to the local apiarists and is an important resource for nectar feeding birds and insects. The fire burnt the whole length of the area.
Another concern about the fire was that the forest is stressed this year because of the drought. If it must be burnt, it should only be burnt on wetter years. We suggested that as a result of frequent burns the shrub understorey may be replaced by a fire prone understorey of grass-like plants and annuals.

In summary, burning should be carried out in such a way as to minimise ecological changes to habitat.
- No burning should be done during droughts.
- All burns should be cool burns.
- All burns should be done in a mosaic pattern to avoid further fragmentation of remnants or wildlife corridors.

Other scientific concerns are that no vegetation surveys were done to determine the growth abundance of each species present in the different habitats. No post fire surveys are planned and no long term records of species or habitat changes will be recorded to document the effects of fire in the area. Biodiversity and ecological concerns must be broadly based to take into account the impact of fire management operations on migratory species, barriers to dispersal, weed invasion, erosion, salinity, water-table effects, and so forth. Our concerns are that fire may cause loss of rare species habitat, habitat trees, or prepare the site for weed invasion.

Fire can be used for management purposes but if employed without adequate knowledge it can threaten the sustainability of ecosystems. We suggest you study the Position Statement "Fire in Ecosystem Management" published by the Ecological Society of Australia. We can provide you with a copy or it can be obtained on http://life.csu.edu.au/esa/esaPSfire.html. We also recommend that you study the paper by Woinarski, J. and Recher, H. E. 1997. "Impact and response: a review of the effects of fire on the Australian avifauna". Pacific Conservation Biology 3:183-205. We can provide you with a copy if NRE does not subscribe to that journal. Finally we strongly support the statement in your Code of Practice: "The Department must engage in coordinated research into the effects and effectiveness of prescribed burning in a range of environments and into upgrading operational method to better meet fire management objectives."

From our inspection of the map you gave us there are a few other comments we would like you to consider.
1. The map indicates that the whole of the Bendigo Creek Reserve is to be burned. If there is a good reason to burn it, then it should be burned in short segments over several years to minimise the impact on the fauna dependent on riparian habitat.
2. We doubt that there is a good reason for burning the Bullock Road area.
3. A long narrow strip is proposed for burning in the Guys Hill Road and Pioneer Road area. If it is all burned at the same time it will change the edge effect with possible Noisy Minor penetration deeper into the forest with adverse effects on smaller bird species. Fire management controls on the adjacent private land would be more sensible.
4. The Sedgwick East area is part of a wildlife corridor between Mandurang, One Tree Hill, etc, and Pilchers Bridge. Care should be taken to prevent fragmentation of this corridor.
5. The long thin strip of vegetation in the Currie Road area should not be fragmented.
6. Hogan's Road should be protected from burning and other fire control - related activity such as slashing roadside vegetation etc. It is known as an important Robin 'Hot-spot'. Flame, Rose, Scarlet, Red-capped, Yellow & Pink Robins have all been observed here together with Jacky Winter. Swift Parrots, Diamond Firetails and Crested Bellbirds also frequent this area. This whole section of the Mandurang Forest should be protected from any disturbance that could make the area less attractive to such an impressive diversity of birds...

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From the Mailbag
Author: Elaine Mathison

Each month the club receives a number of newsletters and magazines: some by subscription and some in exchange for Whirrakee. These are available from the club library.

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PARK WATCH(VNPA)
September 2002

"An Outsider looks at Aboriginal Victoria" by Philip Ingamells looks at the increasing involvement of indigenous Australians in our national parks.

"Parks of the Brisbane Ranges" by Geoff Durham reviews the battle for the creation of this national park. It began in 1918! The park was not proclaimed until 1973, and has been twice increased in size.

"Marine Parks at Last!" outlines the long campaign for the protection of just 5.3% of the state's waters. Good management and adequate resourcing of the parks will be an ongoing need.

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THE LIVING MURRAY
July 2002

Produced by the Murray-Darling Basin Commission, this is a discussion paper on restoring the health of the River Murray. Stage 1 deals with informing and engaging the community.

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THE BIRD OBSERVER(BOCA)
August 2002

- Australian Magpies: a variety of behavioural observations across Australia
- Farm Forest: the development of bird friendly woodland at Broadford Sewage Farm
- A Short (and long) Walk in the Hindu Bush: a bird watching trip to India and Nepal
- Australian Pelican: a report on various behaviours.

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Also received recently:

*Castlemaine Naturalist(CFNC)
August 2002

*Ballarat Naturalist(BFNC)
August 2002

*Geelong Naturalist(GFNC)
August 2002

*Newsletter(Maryborough FNC)
Feb-Aug 2002

*Environment Victoria News
July 2002

*Land for Wildlife News
July/August 2002

*Field Nats News(FNCV)
August 2002

*Environment Defenders Office(EDO)
July 2002
EDO is a community legal service practising public interest planning and environmental law.

*Canopy(Parks Victoria)
July 2002

*Envirobusiness Update(Environment Australia)
August 2002

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Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Speaker Syllabus for General Meetings 2002– Second Wednesday 8:00 pm

Please check each **WHIRRAKEE** for additional events or changes. If a workshop is planned, it will start at 7:00pm. The speaker will be introduced at 8:00 pm.

Date - 2001	Topic	Speaker
9 October	Grevillea Hunting Around Australia	Neil Marriott
13 November	What has been achieved in Waterways Management in the NC Region	Greg Peters
11 December	**Christmas Dinner**	

.....continued from page 12

Why are we concerned about the fire management in the forests around Bendigo? We are concerned because the activities taking place in the forest today will affect the quality of the forests for the next 100 or 200 years, just as the activities of the farmers, miners and foresters of the 1800's have affected the quality of the present forests. The legacy of their use of the forests is many rare or extinct species, eroded soil and impoverished ecosystems. We do not want future generations to inherit the results of an ignorant and indifferent society.

Bird Observation in September

A Painted Honeyeater was observed on Glenise and Rob Moors' place on the 14th September. It has been calling every day since from somewhere near the dam. A Painted Honeyeater came to the property this time last year and it may be the same animal. These birds are known to feed on mistletoe berries but this one presently is feeding on the flowers of the Grey Mistletoe.

Diary

The General, Bird Observers Group and Fauna Study Group meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

General Meeting

Wednesday , October 9 **7.30pm**
The topic of this month's talk is "Grevillea Hunting around Australia by Neil Marriot.

Wednesday, November 13 **7.00pm**
There will be a Workshop prior to the main speaker. It will deal with Plant Names - Latin Roots and the BFNC Indigenous Garden, conducted by BFNC botanists.
Greg Peters will then talk at **8.00pm** about "What has been achieved in Waterways Management in the NC Region"

Wednesday December 11
Christmas Dinner

Bird Observers Group

This group meets (in the clubrooms) on the first Wednesday of the month at 7:30pm. The next meeting is on:

Wednesday, October 2 **7.30pm**
Topic: Bird nests

Wednesday, November 6 **7.30pm**
Topic; Bower birds

Excursion
Saturday, October 19
Field trip – Grassland Birds
Meet at 9am in Epsom at the corner of Eaglehawk Road and Midland Highway (Howard Street) for car pooling.
Contact: Anne Bridley 5449 3479.

'Bush Month' is September 14 to October 15
Events during this time are organised by Trust for Nature.
The program is at www.tfn.org.au.

VFNCA Spring Camp
October 25-27, Ballarat
Descriptions of the many excellent excursions on offer as well as accommodation arrangements and a registration form were included in the July *Whirrakee*.
Please contact John Gegurke (ph 5339 4993) or Carol Hall (ph 53392255) if you would like further information.

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.
W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals.
It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Natural Resources and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.

The Tasmanian Experience
by the Australian Naturalists Network

This year's ANN *GetTogether* in Tasmania will be happening November 9-18, 2002. The core program is based in Launceston, with pre-meeting activities centred around the North-East/East Coast (November 6-9) and post-meeting activities around North-West/West Coast (November 19-22).
See April *Whirrakee* for details.

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continued from the front cover photo....

.....I have only seen one outside of those months, that was January, in the Wellsford Forest. They are believed to occupy ant galleries, where they feed on ants and their eggs and larvae. They have a dark brown to blackish-brown head and nape, and uniform grey to greyish-brown body. This body colour merges to a pink or pale reddish-brown at the tail, hence the common name "pink-tailed" worm lizards. Adults reach a snout to vent length of 140mm. If you see one, please let us know where and when. Likewise, I'm sure DNRE would be interested in the record.